

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-05 CIAE-00 COME-00
DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 EPG-02 FAA-00
PRS-01 PA-02 L-03 SS-15 NSC-05 USIA-15 H-02 IO-13
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R 121830Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2773
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
FAA BRUSSELS
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

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E.O. 11652 N/A
TAGS: EAIR, FR, UK, US
SUBJECT: CIVAIR: FRENCH REACTION TO COURT DECISION
ON CONCORDE

1. SUMMARY: FRENCH MEDIA REACTED WITH PREDICTABLE
SATISFACTION TO NEW YORK COURT DECISION ON CONCORDE,
THOUGH REACTION WAS NOT AS OVERWHELMING AS ONE WOULD
HAVE EXPECTED. OFFICIAL REACTION WAS OBVIOUSLY ONE
OF PLEASURE. WHILE IT IS RECOGNIZED THAT THERE ARE
STILL OBSTACLES TO BE OVERCOME AT NEW YORK, AIR
FRANCE HOPES TO BE ABLE TO COMMENCE DAILY SERVICE
TO NEW YORK ON JUNE 20. END SUMMARY.

2. FRENCH REACTION TO THE NEW YORK COURT
DECISION ON CONCORDE WAS PREDICTABLY ONE OF GREAT
SATISFACTION, BUT NOT OF SUCH OVERWHELMING
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SATISFACTION AS ONE WOULD HAVE EXPECTED.
PERHAPS THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS THAT CONCORDE
HAS ENDURED THESE MANY MONTHS IN SEEKING
ADMITTANCE TO NEW YORK HAVE FUELED NATURAL FRENCH
SKEPTICISM AND CYNICISM, NOTWITHSTANDING THE
ALL-PERVASIVE EMOTION WHICH SEEMED TO
CHARACTERIZE THEIR FRENCH ATTITUDE SO LONG AS

THE OUTCOME AT NEW YORK WAS IN DOUBT. PERHAPS THE
DRAMATIC IMPACT WAS ALSO DIMINISHED BY ADVANCE
SPECULATION, AFTER THE APRIL 28 COURT HEARING,
THAT JUDGE POLLACK SEEMED TO BE LEANING IN FAVOR OF VI
GIVING CONCORDE A FAIR TRIAL. FOR WHATEVER THE
REASON, THE REACTION HERE DOES SEEM A BIT ANTI-
CLIMACTIC WHICH IS PERHAPS A GOOD THING, FOR MOST
OF THE MEDIA REACTION DOES STRESS THE FILING OF
APPEALS TO JUDGE POLLACK'S DECISION AND PROTESTS
BY COMMUNITIES AROUND JFK MUST STILL BE RECKONED
WITH, AND "LE BALLGAME" STILL ISN'T ALL OVER.

3. THE NEWS FROM NEW YORK OF COURSE MADE ALL
THE FRONT PAGES IN PARIS. HOWEVER, WITH THE
EXCEPTION OF LE TEMPS, WHICH DEVOTED ITS
ENTIRE FRONT PAGE TO CONCORDE, THERE WERE NO
BANNER HEADLINES, THOUGH THIS MAY HAVE BEEN
DUE PARTLY TO COMPETITION FROM TWO OTHER MAJOR
NEWS STORIES ON DOMESTIC POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS.
CONCORDE GETS THE NUMBER TWO HEADLINE IN THE
FINANCIAL DAILY LES ECHOS, FOR EXAMPLE, THE STORY
RATES ONLY A SMALL COLUMN ON THE LAST PAGE.
L'HUMANITE'S STORY IS CAPTIONED LACONICALLY:
"CONCORDE SCORES A POINT."

4. LE FIGARO DEVOTES TO THE STORY A FRONT
PAGE EDITORIAL THAT IS ESPECIALLY REFRESHING.
ENTITLED "LOST TIME," THE EDITORIAL IS CRITICAL OF
THE FRENCH AND BRITISH AUTHORITIES FOR HAVING
MISJUDGED THE US SITUATION AND NOT HAVING PRESSED
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FORWARD EARLIER WITH THEIR LAWSUIT. AS A
RESULT, LAMENTS LE FIGARO, A YEAR WAS LOST.
IF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAD HAD BETTER KNOWLEDGE
OF THE US POLITICAL AND JUDICIAL SYSTEM, IT
WOULD NOT HAVE WASTED ITS TIME PLACING ALL ITS
EMPHASIS ON "DIPLOMATIC DEMARCHES, APPEALS AND
WARNINGS" DIRECTED TO THE US EXECUTIVE BRANCH, FOR
"WHEN PRESIDENT CARTER DECLARED THAT THE DECISION
WAS NOT HIS TO TAKE BUT NEW YORK'S, HE WAS
NOT BEING EVASIVE...IT IS PERFECTLY UNTHINKABLE
THAT THE WHITE HOUSE COULD BRING PRESSURE TO
BEAR ON ONE OF THE STATES OF THE UNION. ONLY
THE FEDERAL JUDICIARY CAN DO THAT...AND ONLY
THE JUDICIARY BRANCH HAS THE RIGHT TO INTERPRET
THE CONSTITUTION..." THIS, OF COURSE, WAS THE
KIND OF REASONED, BALANCED PERCEPTION OF REALITIES
ON THE US SCENE THAT WE NEEDED FROM FRENCH MEDIA TWO
MONTHS AGO WHEN EMOTIONS AND TEMPERS WERE RUNNING
SO HIGH OVER HERE, BUT PERHAPS IT WAS TOO MUCH

TO HOPE FOR THEN AND, AS FOR NOW, WELL, BETTER
LATE THAN NEVER. OLD PREJUDICES DIE HARD THOUGH,

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AND ON A MAY 12 AM NEWSCAST A RADIO LUXEMBOURG,
COMMENTATOR FOUND NOTHING BETTER WITH WHICH TO
CONCLUDE HIS CONCORDE STORY THAN TO COMMENT SNIDELY
THAT OBVIOUSLY CONCORDE WOULDN'T HAVE ALL THESE
PROBLEMS IF IT WAS MADE IN THE USA.

5. THE LE MONDE ISSUE PUBLISHED ON THE
AFTERNOON OF MAY 12 DEVOTES MUCH OF AN INSIDE PAGE
TO THE CONCORDE STORY BUT PROVIDES LITTLE IN
THE WAY OF EDITORIAL COMMENT BEYOND NOTING THAT AT
BEST CONCORDE SERVICE TO NEW YORK WOULD BE PROVISIONAL B
BECAUSE OF THE SIXTEEN MONTH TRIAL PERIOD. THERE
IS A STORY FROM NEW YORK REPORTING THE DEVELOPMENTS
THERE, AND OTHER STORY TRACING THE PROBLEMS THAT
HAVE BESET THE CONCORDE PROGRAM.

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6. OFFICIAL REACTION WAS PROMPT AND OBVIOUS. FOURCADE, MINISTER OF EQUIPMENT, EXPRESSED "GREAT SATISFACTION." STATE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION CAVAILLE SAID CONCORDE'S MOST DIFFICULT BATTLE HAD BEEN WON. ALL THE BARRIERS PLACED IN CONCORDE'S WAY FOR A YEAR WERE ILLEGAL, JUST AS THE GOF HAD ALWAYS MAINTAINED. "CONCORDE'S ROUTE TO NEW YORK IS OPEN," HE SAID, ADDING THAT THE TWO CARRIERS WOULD ENTER INTO CONTACT SOONEST WITH THE US AUTHORITIES AND IT SHOULD BE KNOWN IN A FEW DAYS WHEN COMMERCIAL SERVICE TO NEW YORK CAN BEGIN. AIR FRANCE ANNOUNCED IT HOPED TO COMMENCE SERVICE ON JUNE 20 WITH ONE FLIGHT A DAY, AND WOULD ACCEPT TICKET RESERVATIONS FOR NEW YORK AS OF JUNE 1. AIR FRANCE'S DIRECTOR GENERAL PEROL STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT WITH JUDGE POLLACK'S DECISION NOT ALL PROBLEMS FOR CONCORDE SERVICE HAD BEEN SOLVED.

7. THE RPR AND THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF CONCORDE HAVE EACH ISSUED COMMUNIQUE WELCOMING JUDGE POLLACK'S DECISION. THE COMMITTEE'S COMMUNIQUE INDICATED THAT A PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION STILL PLANNED TO GO TO THE US, "IN ORDER TO MAKE KNOWN THE PRICE WHICH ALL POLITICAL GROUPS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ATTACH TO RESPECT FOR INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND THE ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE COUNTRIES IN QUESTION."

8. PRELIMINARY REACTION AT TOULOUSE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN RATHER MIXED, DEPENDING ON WHO WAS BEING INTERVIEWED BY AFP. "WE'VE WON THE BATTLE BUT WE HAVEN'T YET WON THE WAR," WAS HOW AFP SUMMARIZED WHAT IT CALLED "SATISFACTION ACCOMPANIED BY

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PRUDENT RESERVE" ON THE PART OF TRADE UNION LEADERS AT THE SNIAS PLANT. INDIVIDUAL REACTION WAS A BIT PERPLEXING. A CFDT SPOKESMAN SAW JUDGE POLLACK'S DECISION AS "CONFIRMING THE QUALITY OF THE AIRCRAFT AND ITS CONSTRUCTORS. " THE SECRETARY OF THE CGT SECTION AT SNIAS SAW NO REASON NOW NOT TO LAUNCH CONSTRUCTION OF MORE CONCORDES BEYOND THE SIXTEEN

PROGRAMMED OR TO BEGIN STUDY OF AN IMPROVED VERSION OF CONCORDE. AN UNIDENTIFIED SPOKESMAN FOR SNIAS MANAGEMENT WAS REPORTED AS EXPRESSING THE BELIEF THAT LOSS OF FIRST-CLASS PASSENGERS TO CONCORDE ON THE NEW YORK ROUTE WOULD PLACE PANAM AND TWA UNDER IRRESISTIBLE PRESSURE TO BUY CONCORDE. LE FIGARO, IN WINDING UP THE EDITORIAL MENTIONED ABOVE, TAKES A MORE JAUNDICED VIEW OF THE FUTURE: "OVER AND ABOVE THESE LEGAL VICTORIES THE MARKETING OF THE AIRCRAFT REMAINS AS HYPOTHETICAL AS EVER. FIVE AIRCRAFT OF THE SIXTEEN ALREADY BUILT OR OR UNDER COMPLETION ARE STILL TO BE SOLD. BUT THE PRODUCTION LINES CAN BE STARTED UP AGAIN ONLY IF BUYERS APPEAR ON THE SCENE. AND THAT WILL NOT BE DETERMINED SOLELY BY THE POSSIBILITIES OF SERVING THE UNITED STATES. IN THE BEST OF CASES, NEW YORK WILL ONLY BE A PRESTIGE SUCCESS FOR CONCORDE." GAMMON

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